

MUSEZINE '13

Superheroes



MUSEZINE ISSUE 13

SUPER HEROES

A Production of The Bronx Museum of the Arts Teen Council

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Since 2005 the Teen Council is designed to make contemporary art and culture accessible to urban youth. The Teen Council is structured around the production of MUSE Casts, videos available on www.youtube.com/bronxteencouncil, and MUSE Zines, a graphic publication of original work and commentary, by a small group of high school students working closely with instructors in the Media Lab.

In addition, the Teen Council participates in the Museum's ongoing DVD series of interviews with contemporary artists.

Held in conjunction with the school year, this program provides teens with an open forum for the expression of ideas and dialogue on issues affecting young people, and the promotion of the Bronx as an important cultural, political and artistic force.

Application to the Teen Council is open annually from May 1 through June 30. To apply email: education@bronxmuseum.org

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Back cover by Priscilla Cruz

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NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS



HEROES FAIL TOO!!

Super Mommy

By: Monique "Mokka" Simmons

*This Super Woman that stands before me,
Should have the Nobel award or given the key to the city.
Powerful like those Puff Girls but more mature than most girls
And trust if it all falls, rug swept from under my feet
She will be there and her; Villains cannot beat*

*She is all heroes in one; She helped make you the person you have become
Phenomenal Woman, Super Woman, MOTHER*



*This Wonder Woman has been thru hell and high water for me
My Mother, an Amazon Queen
When there is nowhere to turn its her shoulder I lean
If honesty is what she wants, Ha Lasso of truth is all she needs
But really that's just the belt that gets to me :D*

*She is all heroes in one; She helped make you the person you have become
Phenomenal Woman, Super Woman, MOTHER*

*You would think she is the wonder twins or three
But she is just Wonder Mommy with a large family
The house, kids and work are all her responsibility
And if it was me it be killing me
But Wonder Mom will never fret
cuz she knows she is the real threat
A Single Mother can win any bet*

*She is all heroes in one; She helped make you the person you have become
Phenomenal Woman, Super Woman, MOTHER*



*Dedicated to My rock, My moon, My Super Mommy
Ms. Gretchen Simmons*



By Krystal Romero

Darkness attempts to consume you
You're helpless with nothing left to do
You close your eyes and try not to look
At all of life's monsters, villains, and crooks

You cry for help in every way
Waiting and praying for someone to say
"Have no fear, I'm right here"
Hoping someone is near

Who's that hero that hears your cry?
It's the soldier and police man that fights and is willing to die
Who picks up a weapon and aims to protect
Their approach to a villain is always direct

It's the firefighter that jumps in smoke and flames
Who breaks through walls and has no shame
Saving the people that they don't know
Doing the best a hero can show

Or maybe it's the closest heroes of them all
Your mother and father who have never let you fall
The ones who raised the person you are today
They helped you in every single way

Or that brother or sister who's always on your side
The ones that wiped all the tears you cried
Who defended you till the end
Who always gave you a hand to lend

Could it be the friends you see every day?
The one's that have your back and are able to say
"I'm always going to be here" and you know its true
And they do everything they can just for you.

Most of all it could be the hero you least expect
The one you need to show the most respect
The hero who knows you best
The one who's actions are more important than the rest

Can you guess who?



IF I WERE A SUPERHERO
JONATHAN JEFFREY

A Woman Could Do Many Things Just Like a Man



story by Ridwana Khalik

Drawing by Abiel Wilson

Back then Bengali girls were not allowed to go forward in their life. Most of the Bengali girls didn't get a chance to be educated because they had to get married after they turned eighteen years old or even younger than that. In their opinion, women don't need to study. They only need to know how to cook and how to maintain their husband's family. They also didn't let the girls work outside, they were like, "you are a girl you don't need to go out, and your job is only inside the house." Women always felt ignored from the Bengali society. However, Moni didn't want her life to be the same as those girls.

Moni was born in a poor family. Moni has five sisters and she is the second oldest sister in her family. She saw how her sister Rine's life became miserable after she got married. Because of her father, Rine had to get married at a very early age with an older man to possibly change her family's financial status. Therefore, Rine got married when she was only sixteen years old. At that age, she is supposed to be in school playing with friends and enjoying her life. Instead of that she had to maintain her husband's family by cooking and taking care of it all. After Rine got married, the doctor found that her husband had cancer. The doctor couldn't do anything about it because he was in a very serious situation. Two years later Rine's husband passed away and she had to return to her father's family. After that, Rine always had to wear a white sari, which is a symbol for a widowed woman. Her life started to go on in her father's family being as a widowed woman.

Moni was really Rine's opposite. Moni did not want her life to be like Rine's after she finished high school, she decided to leave home in order to get her bachelor's degree. She asked her father if she could go and live on a school's campus, but her father refused it. "I don't want my life to be destroyed like Rine's. I don't want to depend on other people in my life," Moni said to her father. Moni had to make her decision on her own. She knew how people would talk about her, but she didn't care about what other people thought.

After she left, she found a job in a soup kitchen. Everyday at four in the morning, she had to wake up and get ready for her job. After work, she had to go to college. Her class was from 1pm – 4pm. She also tutored some high school students. This is how she had to make money for herself because she didn't get any support from her father. Since she was not getting any help from her father, that also motivated her to succeed in her life and to show her society how a woman could do anything like a man. After that, her life became busy and difficult, but she was still satisfied.

Moni returned home with her bachelor's degree and she also got a job as a teacher in a middle school. After the year, her father passed away. At that time, she supported her family and made other people think that a woman could do many things just like a man.

Yvonne

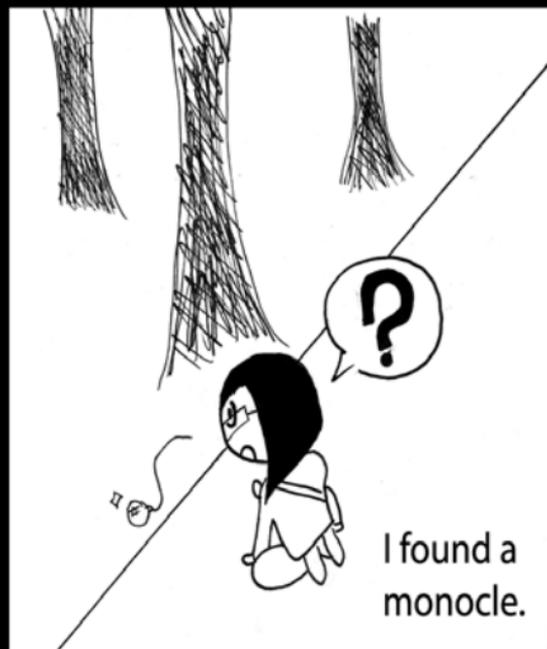


YOU'RE THE HERO

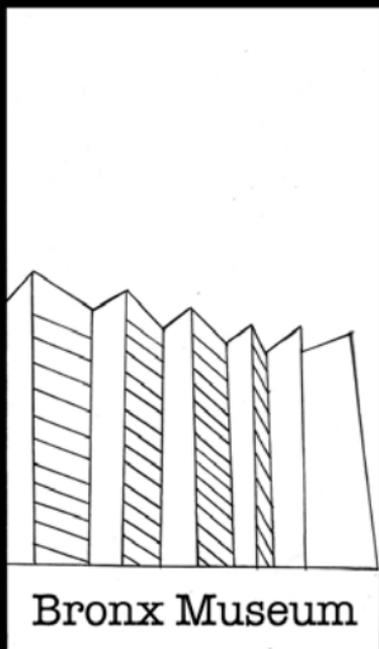
Everyone thinks that all superheroes have powers. Some powers are cooler than others. Almost all the heroes have the same powers. They must have lasers or fly. I don't think that's true. Sometimes the most awesome powers are hidden and no one can see them not even you.....



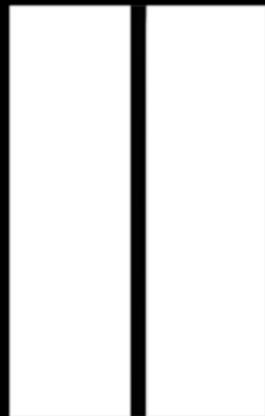
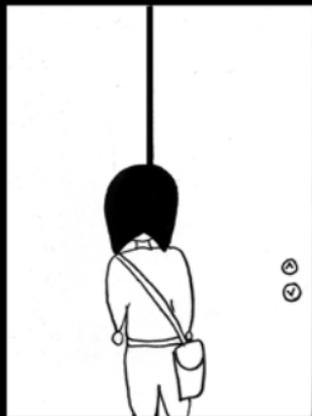
It was Wednesday and
while I was was walking
to the museum....



I found a
monacle.



Bronx Museum

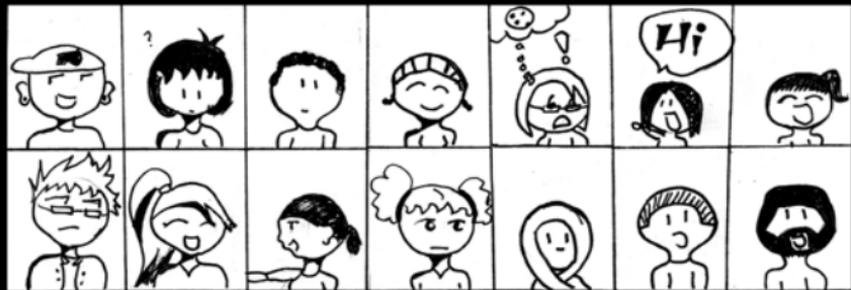


Sooooo.....

guys....

Whats up? What's new?





**As everyone went
around telling their stories,
I took out the monocle that
I found in the park.
When I put it on I couldn't
believe my eyes.**



WHOA!!!!!!

**Everyone changed. There was something
super about them.
It was as if they had transformed into
superheroes.
This is what I saw.....**

Fur-Mean

"COME ON GUYS"

Leader- Organizes everybody in one move and has an evil laugh.



HECTIC

Promoter- Can change into animals and parties a lot.



HA!

WET WILLIE

Has the power to make people feel bad by saying "HA!" in their face and can make stupid voices.



Hannikans

Leader- Sweet and nice. Bubbles come out of her when she laughs.

Binka

Can talk to kitties and can attack with only saying "meow."



SWAGDRAGON

Can cosplay as whoever and whenever and obtain their power in the process.

Weak Sauce

Prankster- Draws graffiti that can come to life.



SUZIE

Diva- Can give anyone a bad hair day with her brush.



J-NINJA

Freestyles his opponents away.



Minnie Whip

Can make her
water color paintings
come to life.



Mokka Ninja Star

Transforms any
Blackberry to anything
she wants.

RUMA

Best sneak attacker.



KRIS

Newbie- Can bomb
anyone to the moon.



After seeing everyone and their unique powers I was wondering what I had. I ran home after work only to discover that the monocle had shattered in my pack. I was so upset, that I told my sister what happened. Then she told me "Powers are what make people unique. It's something that other people see in you. Everyone has a power."

**SO I GUESS THE MORAL OF THIS LITTLE STORY
IS THAT YOU ARE A HERO IN YOUR OWN LITTLE WAY.**

THE END

The Kid in Me at the Bronx Museum!!!

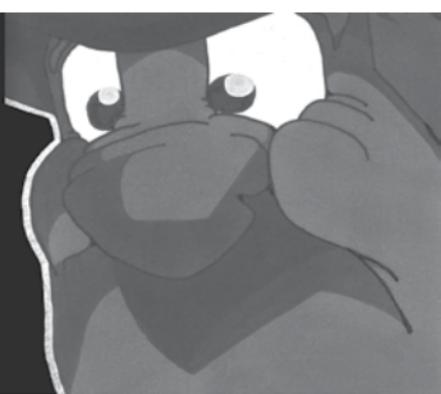
Teen Art Exhibition

coming soon:

Exhibition: June 9-19, 2011

Check out our website for updates:

<http://bronxteens.weebly.com>



The Bronx Museum Teen Council
Artist Interview DVD Series Presents:

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TEEN SUMMER PROGRAM 2011

Qualifications:

Teens entering 10th - 12th grade
Completed application
Teacher recommendation
Interest in the arts!

Questions?

education@bronxmuseum.org
718-681-6000 x132

Download application form at:
<http://bronxteens.weebly.com>

What creates a neighborhood?

What do you know about it?

Who lives there?

The Bronx Museum of the Arts is located in the South Bronx and is surrounded by other organizations, historical landmarks, a well-known baseball stadium, park, and many bodegas and restaurants. Inspired by the artworks of Emilio Sanchez, study and explore the neighborhood to gain an understanding of the South Bronx through discussions, walking tours, interviews, projects and art-making.

July 18 - August 12

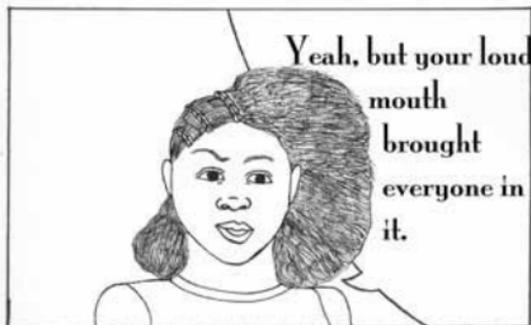
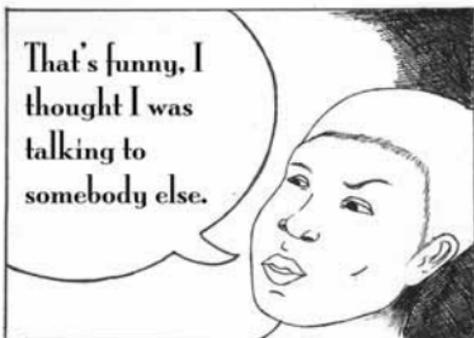
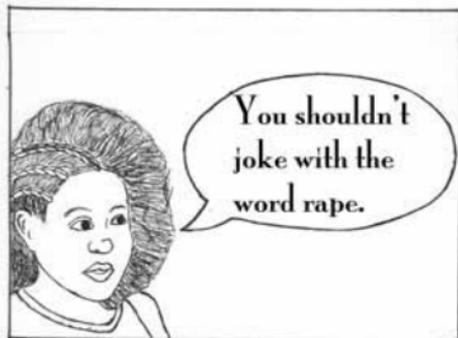
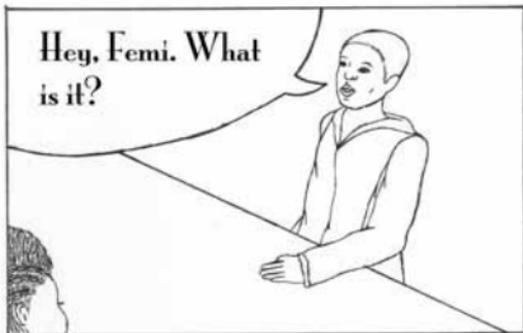
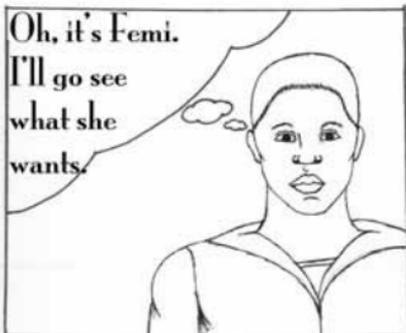
Mondays - Thursdays

10:00 AM - 1:00 PM



Devin's Misguidance

Written and Illustrated by Abiel Wilson





If I were a Superhero

By Jonathan Jeffrey

If I were a superhero, I would choose to have Superman's power because he is almost indestructible and with his powers I can make the world a better place for everyone who values the environment and supports his or her community. My role as a superhero would have to be protecting my family and this should be on everyone's agenda no matter what your occupation is or your ability to fight. Being a superhero takes courage, diligence, responsibilities, and a bunch of other stuff that has to do with being good. There are many ways to become a hero, such as saving lives, helping innocent people from danger or stopping war. Superheroes don't always do the right thing, but that's what people expect most of the time and there aren't that many superheroes to call.

People need to learn for themselves what it means to be a superhero and it's not an easy task but at the end it symbolizes greatness. It doesn't matter how you do it. Superheroes are adored and admired because of their super powers and how they intend to use those super powers for the greater good or bad. Bad superheroes aren't heroes at all. Instead the people who choose to use their super powers for bad deeds like world domination are called Villains. A villain is the enemy who does the complete opposite of a hero and his or her only goal is to get what he or she wants in order to gain control of some kind.

The world needs heroes in order to keep this kind of people in check and reality isn't like the comic books we read involving mutations, giant monsters, or even aliens and I'm pretty sure you know that unless you're stuck in the twilight zone. The people who struggle and can't find a solution to their problems rely on a hero and I'm here to tell you, the hero is in you. I believe any individual with a clear understanding of right and wrong can be a superhero. For the most part, even though every individual doesn't have super powers, there is something about everyone that makes them special. Find the hero in you and embrace the world with the freedom to bring justice to all.



IF I WERE A SUPERHERO
JONATHAN JEFFREY

Sheltering the Blood of Our Heroes

Written and illustrated by Abiel Wilson

He opens his weary eyes, but his eyesight fails him. Dust settles on his wounds, stinging him. He lays on the ground, too weak to move. He is able to see his friends scattered around him, all of them on the ground, bleeding. He closes his eyes just to open them again to realize that it was another nightmare of his past.

He's a soldier and like other soldiers he has given up his life to protect our way of living with freedom and also like many soldiers is homeless. Having not showered in weeks he reeks. His clothes are worn and unclean. He touches the side of his jaw. He feels the indent, the damage done by the bomb his squad's tank had hit and every time he tries to sleep he re-lives that moment again and again.

These men and women who put themselves in harm's way are heroes and most of us recognize and honor that from time to time. Although when we think or just hear of the word hero do we think of them? Let alone take care of them?

If you're like me you probably only think of them when they are mentioned in the news, or are in documentaries. Not because you don't care about them, they're just not the people you would usually think about. It's understandable if you're not close to or even know a soldier. Or maybe it's because you don't support the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even if you don't really know one or don't believe in them fighting you should agree that these people deserve respect and the best repayment possible after losing some of their blood,- and for several even some of their sanity for our country. So why are they coming back to find that they have no place to live?

You have to focus on what a person needs to gain and maintain a home - a job. In order to have a job one needs to be mentally stable and that is where the issue comes in for a lot of soldiers. Many soldiers come home with mental disorders, the most famous being post-traumatic stress disorder. This type of disorder causes the soldiers to have difficulty adjusting to regular life because of symptoms like having trouble sleeping, reoccurring dreams of disturbing events, in this case the war, lack of mood, no longer wanting to part take in activities, fainting, headaches, and being pale.¹ Having these symptoms makes it hard for the soldiers to gain or maintain a job to pay for a home. According to The Department of Veterans Affairs in 2008 about one fifth of the thirty thousand soldiers that went to their health care facilities had a mental problem.²

1) Post-traumatic stress disorder, 14 February 2010, available from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001923>, accessed 6 February 2011

2) Homeless Soldiers: Our Brave Soldiers Are Coming Home From Iraq And Afghanistan With No Place To Live, 13 August 2008, available from <http://www.veteranjournal.com/homeless-soldiers/>, accessed 7 February 2011

If it's not mental problems a homeless soldier is facing then it's the lack of support from their families, or drug and/or alcohol abuse, and the cost of expensive housing.³

Many may feel that only a few soldiers have this problem with being homeless. Many of us believe that all soldiers are being paid enough for housing after they have served so they do have shelter, unfortunately, this is not so.

Even though these soldiers have many issues to deal with is that a good enough reason that they do not have permanent places to live in? Is it just the hardship of life or the failure of America to take care of those who cared enough for us to risk death? Many people know about there being homeless soldiers so isn't there more that we can do for them since we're aware about it?

We should wonder if the homeless programs of our government are doing a good job of helping them. Yes, a certain number of the soldiers have mental disabilities, but isn't it the government's duty to provide the needed medicine and care they need after they almost died for us? And what about those who are mentally stable but can't find a job? They already did the most anyone can do for us and yet they still have to get a job like the rest of us who didn't fight to defend just to have a place to rest?

If you truly care and respect our soldiers then make an attempt to help them. Look for charities that you know for sure uses money to support the ones in need of a place and food.

And for those of you whose excuse is I don't support the war, don't let your belief cloud your concern for others. You don't have to believe the war is justified, that's your American right, but as an American you should also want to help those who pledged their lives to our country.

No one who has been injured, lost their leg, arm, or even sight while defending their country should come back home to find that they have no place to live.

Suggestions for charities to donate to:

You can visit the website,

<http://www.networkforgood.org/Partner/NFG/SearchLanding.aspx>, and donate to charities such as:

- Iraq And Afghanistan Veterans Of America Inc
- HOMELESS AMERICAN VETERANS SELF-HELP INITIATIVE INC
- Western New York Veterans Housing Coalition, Inc.

3) FAQ about Homeless Veterans, 1997-2011, available from <http://www.nchv.org/background.cfm>, accessed 7 February 2011



Abiel Wilson

Would you lend a hand to someone
reaching out their's for help?

Many people know that to be a hero you
should help others. Remember to reach to
those in need.



Written and illustrated
by Abiel Wilson

FLY

Flying isn't easy for me.

I jump high, land then crumble to my knee.

I release a sigh at my failure, being able to fly will never
happen for me.

I go to school by train, and then walk from there

Every minute of the day hurts like a strand of pulled hair.

Then at the end of the day I make it there.

I'm in his arms where everything feels Fair.

It's rare...to be scared, nervous, happy and in love.

He's like super man when I glance up above.

His drown skin.

He has me soaring deep within and I can fly anywhere when
I'm with him.

by:

Ashleigh Ham

SUPERUSELESS SUPERPOWER'S INTERVIEW

I interviewed the geniuses who came up with the great idea to publish a blog (that became a book) about Superuseless Superpowers and even though i haven't read the book, i find this idea to be Supernatural and weird but strangely persuasive.

BY: JONATHAN JEFFREY

How did you come up with the idea of Superuseless Superpowers?

After many days of trials and tribulations, Archimedes had his eureka moment when his wife insisted he stop working and take a bath. The bathwater rose and now we can measure the volume of irregular objects. Wait, what was the question? Oh right, so our "eureka" moment came randomly one random day while on a random lunch-break at our advertising job. I guess you can say we put in a lot of useless hours at the ad agency because subconsciously, Superuseless Superpowers was born.

Are there any true stories behind any Superuseless Superpowers?

The power that hits closest to home is probably Flawgic, the ability to orate with impeccable logic but only when arguing with your girlfriend/wife. All four of us are in serious relationships and one of us has even dated a Dominican woman.

What is the reason for Superuseless Superpowers?

It's a pretty stupid idea and we love stupid things. You could also say that our critical take on once-vaunted superheroes is particularly opposite given the current cynicism towards artifacts of previous cultural paradigms. Then again, did Gallagher really need a reason to smash watermelons?

What were people's reactions after being introduced to your Superuseless Superpower idea?

Apparently this concept is universal. We were surprised to hear many fans say they used to think of Superuseless Superpowers with their friends. We just happened to be the first a-holes to create a blog and write a book on the subject.

What are the positives and negatives about Superuseless Superpower?

The positives: Thinking of new powers is a welcome break to any day. It also sparks debate among friends. Like whether a power is truly "useless" or not. The negatives: Time and Quality. It may look lo-fi, but the superuseless meme requires original art and stories. It takes some time to get it right. Also, we feel a lot of pressure to outdumb ourselves with new, amazing powers. Although the bad ones are still funny for a different reason.

If you can make up a Superuseless Superpower on the spot what will it be?

Tie Bo: the ability to turn any necktie into a bolo tie.

What makes you decide which super powers are selected for publication?

First, it has to be useless. Second, it has to make us laugh. Bonus: if the power kills our hero upon use.

How did your blog become a book?

The short answer is dumb luck. The longer answer is Gizmodo, Kottke.org and BuzzFeed featured our blog the same week it launched. We got 40,000 hits in one day. We thought the page counter was broken. Based on the success of the blog, a literary agent approached us and said we should try to score a book deal. So we put together a proposal and, shazam, Sourcebooks said they'd publish us. The nice thing about the book is that it's inspired by the blog, but it's in no way a carbon copy. We've got all kinds of new stuff, like lots of new powers, illustrations by Mark Todd, origin stories, and even fake ads for useless products.

What's next for the superuseless super power saga?

Our focus is still on the blog and keeping the powers flowing. We've even got a new category called Superuseless Superweapons. In the future, we'd love to do another book or create an animated TV series.

I would like to thank Adolfo Alcala, Patrick Conlon, Jason Nitti, and Neel Williams for giving me the opportunity to ask questions about their new book, Superuseless Superpowers, and did I mention the book is out in stores like Barnes and Nobles, amazon.com right now, and it will be in the stores urban Outfitters in mid may. Check out the website: superuselesspowers.com where you can experience something like this:

Snidekick

Your right-hand man. Your brother-in-arms. Your sarcastic-prick-partner-in-a-mask? He's the Snidekick. Unlike Robin or Tonto, this f@#%^&*g guy always has some snarky remark. His cynical Generation Xisms can really stick in your craw. No one likes to be mocked when they're out saving the world. Dude doesn't even help out in a fight. He just comments from the sidelines like he's a character on Mystery Science 3000. Truly superuseless.



Heroes of My Family

Written by Abiel Wilson

My two great maternal grandparents and my paternal grandparents are four heroes I am honoring on this page. Below are paragraphs describing of why they should be respected.

Grandma Rose (maternal great grandmother).

Grandma Rose has made sacrifices for her family, one of them being that an early age she stayed home to help her mom take care of her siblings. She has given birth to eleven children; unfortunately one passed away as a baby. She raised her children along with one of her granddaughters. She was a skilled seamstress who made clothes for family members. Being a believer of God she taught my mom how to read the Bible. Her love of family and faith in God is to be respected.

Papa (maternal great grandfather).

Papa was a proud farmer. He took pride in his animals and crops. What I remember most about him was his love of company and eating meat. He took enjoyment in telling jokes and stories. Whenever a family member visited he would laugh with them. He also took a lot of pride in my brother. He's partly the reason my brother knows how to treat grown men with respect.

Grandpa Wilson (paternal grandfather).

When I was very young, Grandpa Wilson along with one of my cousins came from Antigua to visit my family. He was a good storyteller. He would share with my brother and I ghost stories. I still laugh when from time to time he used to say to us, "Sid dung [sit down]."

Grandma Wilson (paternal grandmother).

When I was visiting my paternal grandparents, Grandma Wilson wanted to make sure I was comfortable and seemed to have a love for cooking. She would ask many times if I would like something to eat. She's also a very strong spoken woman. She is not afraid to speak her mind.



**Present this
at the front
Desk for a
FREE teen
museum
admission!**

**Expires
July 31st, 2011**

**LOOK
AT
THAT!**





IF I WERE A SUPERHERO
JONATHAN JEFFREY

AMAZING

By Ashleigh Ham

At only 21 years of age I find myself in the best place with the worst people. I'm one of the most important ingredients needed for a good time, I hold down the drugs. Money is my super hero. It saves my life every time. When I'm hungry its there to keep me fed. The clothes I wear, the home I have, the jail time that it gets me out of. What would I do with out my savior, Money? But that's not what I'm feeling anymore.

I usually get up and greet my hero; he's resting on my night table. But recently I've been waking up and I haven't been there. And each morning I'm ready to shoot some one. It has happened four times already. I wake up with rage heading into my living room, gun in my left hand right hand ready for the first strike. I don't find what I'm prepared for, Aprils on the floor counting money calculator to her left ... my check book to her right and a pile of bills in front of her. When she finally looks up I'm nervous with the cold piece of steel behind my back, I'm scared she will see it then leave. "How do u get in my house??" I ask jokingly. "I made the key the day after you almost lost your life drunk driving. I haven't trusted you since." She glanced up at me from the pile of bills. "I Love you best Friend", she concluded the conversation with that statement, because I was completely lost of words.

I wake up each morning, brush my teeth, scratch my neck while pulling my fingers through my hair, tugging softly at my edges...I try to avoid the mirror. I look away once, I get the courage to look at the man in the mirror with disappointment and disapproval but grin at my boyish charm. I wake up lost, I live lost and I am lost. But she sees me...what does she see?

I'm Amaize. The perfect name to fit the reactions I get when I ease my way out of trouble thanks to my hero. But lately I feel like my super hero has a sidekick and her name is April...she is my July everyday of the week; it's like summertime fun all year round. But she isn't expendable, and she makes demands like hugs when we greet, rides, home, work and movie night. I want to follow but I feel less protected but it's the most safe I have ever felt in life when I do them. So I decided to push her away.

We met about 6 years ago, it started off weird anyway, I would always see her going to the Chinese Restaurant on the corner of my block. I thought she was a guy until I walked in with her; she was a tomboy that held great conversation. I asked her for a dollar the first time we spoke and she gave it to me, and I liked hanging out with her ever since. Over time she became more lady like and appealing to my better nature, I valued her friendship more than others.

I can't stand her; she pops up with food in the morning. Then talk for hours. She always ends up on my video games beating high scores. She doesn't make my pants tight, like any other female. Truthfully she doesn't even fit in the same league as them but she's in a different category in my life from them. She makes my stomach hurt and I get weird urges to get rid of my MONEY, I want her to enjoy it as much as I do, I want her to meet my hero! That's when I want to be mean. I come up with lame excuses like I have business to handle or start an argument and that just makes her want to leave. I want her to leave? After she's gone, I feel something else and my super hero cant help, then I'm confused and just want to go do something stupid hoping one of them come through for me, but I want the side kick more.

I find out when the next party is, I make it my business to be there. I sit staring blank at my Face book page... I check her page to see if she's sending me any "subs". She didn't. I dress in everything name brand. I have an image to up hold. My Blackberry is ringing off the hook. Ringing every five minuets. Bye this time I'm removing my key from the door I decide to bring the rampage in my pocket to an end. It's the sidekick. " What happin'?" I answer calm as I can be. " Its movie night, tickets on me...wussup?" she blurts out. Anxious and eager to go

but my pride wouldn't let me; my superhero was all I believed in. Love never ever crossed my mind before, well until just now. I'm stuck standing silent trying to focus on the money to be had, or the love to be made. I bite my bottom lip until its pink, and let go, "where you at den?" I quickly responded. I felt too vulnerable. I hung the phone up on her then went to where I know I was meant to be... out making some money.

In the car I ignored every time she called. I made it to my drop off point and could not have been better and I could not have been happier with the transaction and the money made. I put the six grand in my pocket. I drove off...I glanced down at my waist and then back at the road and all I could see was lights. I guess tonight April and my hero switched places because in the moment when the car flipped... all I wanted was April.

When I woke up my legs were in complete casts. Half of my face was completely covered in gauze, every blink my face throbbed with pain. I could only see out my right side looking away from the door. I couldn't even turn my neck. "You're up" April raced to my good eye, "Don't be upset I had to put the money you had in your pants in a bank account so the cops wouldn't start asking too many questions. When the cops couldn't get your wallet out the glove box in your completely totaled car, they used your cracked cell phone to pull a number to verify who you were. There were twelve missed calls from me." She sat and glanced deep in to my eye. "So this is what u stood me up for? If you would have just answered your phone, you would have been with me safe!" She smiled angrily but couldn't hold it long and began to get teary eyed. "A girl was texting and driving and her jeep drifted onto the wrong lane, you was in a head on collision", she took a deep breath. "April..." I mumbled but she cut me off. "The eighteen year old girl died...I may not be as important as your money but I'm worth more than six thousand dollars, Amaize! I'm not into all that hood business but I manage", she manages to smile one more time before the first tear fell. "Its wrong but I'm glad its her and not you...Do you see why I don't trust you Now!" she blurted out over her tears. She was never a sidekick because she saves my life everyday I'm blessed to have her in it. It hurt so bad to speak but she needed to hear this... so I said it, "I love you best friend"



Photos and Texts by
Katherine Casado
Study Abroad,
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Gilma Scholar

Orphanage Villa Bendición, in Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana.

When I first decided to volunteer at Villa Bendición my goal was to educate and empower the children. I wanted to be their teacher, their role model, their big sister. From the very moment I saw these children with their bright smiles and arms wide open, I knew exactly why they named the place Villa Bendición. It was definitely a blessing. Such beautiful children running around as if life couldn't be any sweeter; I knew I was in the right place. They didn't have many toys to play with, but those big, brave smiles never left their tiny faces. Instead of a teacher, I was a student. They taught me so much about the country I thought I knew so well. Because of these young heroes, the culture of the Dominican Republic survives. They were so proud of their hair, their clothes, their families, their language, their skin, their identity. They empowered me, educated me. These young, enthusiastic faces are the definition of super heroes. When I grow up, I hope to be just like them.

Calle Sarasota in Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana.

Every morning was a workout. Because of the lack of transportation available to leave me by Pontificia Universidad Catholica Madre y Maestra, the university I studied at in the Dominican Republic, I had no choice but to walk. It was a 20 minute journey to school, and when it was over it was a 20 minute journey back home. The sun was so happy to see me every day, and I know this because it never left my side. I would get to school with sweat dripping down my back, down my face, and the same happened on my way home. But the sweetest part of my walk every morning and evening was when I saw these two faces ready to sell me fresh fruit. Just when that long walk home seemed impossible in the exhausting heat, these beautiful Haitian faces were always smiling at me, offering me fruit, offering to save the day. Super heroes indeed.





Photo #3: Taken in the Zona Colonial (Colonial Zone) in Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana.

After studying abroad in the Dominican Republic for 4 months, I realized how much the west has influenced Dominican modern society. It has been Americanized, but Dominicans have not completely forgotten about their people. This woman carrying fruit on her head is a super hero of Dominican culture. Walking for miles with her head high up, back straight, the sun beaming right on her as if she is in the spot light, sweat dripping down her face, exhausted from yelling out "Frutas! Frutas!," this woman never stops for a break. She is flashing her African heritage in tourists faces, reminding us that Dominicans have not totally drowned themselves in the melting pot of globalization. While many heroes save lives, this hero is saving a culture. She is indeed a wonder woman and the goddess of ethnic pride.

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